

Simeon's Song

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[0 : 0 0] So, I just want to take a few moments this morning to think about this song of Simeon together. These have been great songs and it's great that we've been able to spend some time today singing and we'll finish the service with a song as well.

And songs are very important, which we'll see also as we go through this. But as I mentioned earlier, we've been looking at different songs of the Advent over this last month.

So, I just want to come to this last one, the song of Simeon or the prophecy of Simeon. Really, it's verses 29 to 32 that you see is marked differently in your Bibles.

It's written as poetry and it is the prophecy that Simeon was given. Now, I just want to mention for a start, two things that are common to all the songs.

And if you've been following or if you've been here over this last month, you'll be aware of these things, maybe not consciously, but hopefully when I highlight them, you'll be aware of them.

[1 : 0 0] There's two common, at least two common factors. The first is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is mentioned really strongly in each of the songs that we've looked at over the last month.

He's the divine mover. He's the orchestrator. He's the one who brings these songs together into the hearts and minds of the original people who said them and that has been recorded for us in Scripture.

We saw it with Elizabeth. We saw it with Mary, who was overshadowed by the power of the Holy Spirit. We saw it with Zechariah when he spoke and prophesied about John the Baptist.

We saw in the prophecy of John himself that he would be someone who was filled with the Holy Spirit and that he would be a spirit-filled man. And now we have Simeon, and we're told a couple of times in this passage that we read that he was anointed by the Spirit, it was revealed by the Spirit, and he came in the Spirit, even physically came to the temple in the power of the Spirit.

So what we find in all of these different songs and different adventures of the New Testament story of the birth of Jesus, that the Holy Spirit is the main player in many ways.

[2 : 2 8] He's the main person there. And what we're seeing in that is we're seeing the thread of God's plan, that God is integral to each of these vents, to each of these people, to each of the messages that they bring, because the Holy Spirit is the one who reveals to us God's will and makes known what God wants for us.

And so we see that he is unveiling, unfolding what has already been planned from before the creation of the world, and this divine conversation between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit about our salvation, about redemption, about Him revealing His love, and the Holy Spirit comes at the right time and the right way to begin to reveal exactly God's purpose and God's plan.

And so the great thing about that for us this morning is that if we are Christians, we are indwelt by the power of the Holy Spirit. We have the life of God in us through the Holy Spirit, which means that we also are integrally involved in this story, that we become part of this story, that we as Christians and every Christian throughout the world, wherever they are today, is at the heart of God's plan.

Just as much as it was revealed in the very beginning, there's this kind of divine genetic link between us and between the story of the birth of Jesus and between this song of Zechariah.

The Holy Spirit is integral in revealing God's word and continues to be integral in revealing God to us as Christians, revealing the love of Christ and giving us new life so that we are dead before we come to Christ spiritually.

[4 : 18] But He breathes life into us and gives us hope for eternal life, as we were saying with the children also. So that's the first common factor is the Holy Spirit. The second common factor, I think, is the people, the kind of people that God chooses to work through in these stories, the songs of Advent.

We've got an uneducated teenager girl. We've got shepherds who were despised in society and were regarded as unworthy and untrustworthy people.

We have Zechariah, kind of, otherwise unknown priest who worked in Jerusalem. And now here we have an old man, Simeon, paving the way for the Messiah, and all of them paving the way for the Messiah, touched by God, rubbing shoulders with dignitaries from the east.

And it is interesting that these characters who are otherwise unknown and unheralded in the world in which we live are crucial to God's plan.

And the people that are incidental is Herod, Quirinius, Caesar Augustus, the big shots of their day, the important people, the political leaders, the movers and shakers.

[5 : 43] They just happen to be mentioned because they are there at the same time. And we have Herod's powerful effort, of course, to destroy the Savior and to remain in his place of raging authority.

And you've got Caesar who simply couldn't care less about the world of Jesus and all those who lived and came into that world as they vied for power and prestige.

And yet they are incidental to the Christmas story and to the great involvement of those that God chose to use.

So as we remember that today and the priorities that we have today, on Christmas Day, we remember Jesus and we remember the kind of choices He makes of people and those that are important to Him.

The world today is talking about Putin, talking about Biden, talking about Messi. They're always talking about Messi.

[6 : 49] But as believers, we talk about Jesus and we recognize in our ordinariness that Jesus has made us extremely significant, not because of anything in ourselves, but because He chooses to work through and to love and embrace those who will humbly come to Him by faith.

Integral to His plan, integral to His purposes, integral to this great, wonderful sovereign God who is preparing a future for His people.

So we see these two common factors. And then briefly, we see another two things. I'll not take long with this. We notice about the Holy Spirit who works through the song and the poem that Simeon expresses when he holds the baby Jesus in his arms.

The first time he sees the Holy Spirit, I think, inspires Simeon, and that's a great thing. When he sees the child Jesus, he's inspired to worship.

He praises God and he worships God and we're told that he took Him and blessed God and spoke. He was praising God because he recognized that this is the coming Messiah.

[8 : 16] He understood His Old Testament. He had been promised in a word from God that he would see the Savior before he died. And this is Him praising God, now let your servant depart in peace according to your word for my eyes have seen your salvation that you've prepared in the presence of all peoples.

And he's worshiping God because he sees that as he holds this child in his arms that this is the Savior. I'm not sure he would have fully understood in any way what that meant and what it looked like because many people had different ideas.

But nonetheless, he trusted that this child was sent from God and was to be the Savior and that salvation was the very core of his praise as he offered his praise.

And it must always remain the central focus of our worship and our praise is thanking God for salvation, not just for the birth of Jesus, not just for the growth of Jesus and for the life of Jesus, but for the cross of Jesus and for the resurrection of Jesus and the ascension.

And that is where we come today and worship because we find our identity as believers in this risen ascended Savior and the salvation that has been planned from before the creation of the world.

[9 : 31] That's where we find our identity. That's where we root our identity this morning as Christians, constantly. And we let go of the questions of being good enough, being popular enough, being influential enough, being successful enough, being like Quirinius enough or Herod enough or Messy enough.

When we deal with the problem of getting old, of our dreams being emptied, in the battles of life we can overcome and be victorious because we worship the God who has saved us and has given us identity and hope and a future.

Whatever circumstances and we don't belittle the circumstances around us which we'll mention at the end. So He worships because of the salvation that has come. My eyes have seen Your salvation, but also because His understanding just of the sovereignty of this God.

He says, you know, it's according to Your Word, it's already purposed and planned. It's something You've already prepared in the presence of Your people. Simeon saying, I know my times are in Your hand and I know I'll stay alive until, because You've promised that until I see the Savior.

Now take me home. Take me home. My time is in Your hand, this great sovereignty of God that He recognizes and causes Him to worship in this amazing moment.

[10 : 55] And again as we come and worship today, we remember the importance of the sovereignty of God as we do so, that we will all stand before Him on that last day, not just today as we live, not just as we look back to Jesus and think of His great plan, but we remember that whatever matter that we regard as utterly significant, that we prioritize all our burdens and everything else that we face will seem like a grain of sand in that moment when our eternal future is publicly declared before the universe.

And the importance of remembering His sovereignty over our lives and trusting and worshiping Him before the living God.

And so we worship. So we worship today. We worship because of God's sovereignty and because of His great purpose and His great plan and His great salvation.

We praise, just like Simeon did, and we're ordained to praise. That's one of the great things. There may be people from different nationalities, there are people, there's lots of people from different nationalities here today.

And I think other nationalities sometimes are much better than Scottish people at praising, at least singing praise anyway. We sometimes rear a bit doer and presbyterian, and we sometimes don't sing with passion and with delight, but we have this great free gift that have been given to us as believers.

[12 : 23] We know God's salvation and we know His great sovereignty in our lives. And singing is a part of that. You just watch, speaking of messy, you just watch the Argentinian nation singing.

The millions of people that came onto the street to sing the Argentinian national anthem, to sing songs of praise over what had happened, because it's something natural to us in celebration and thanksgiving.

We sing even in the midst of terrible circumstances. And we sing with awe when we think of what God has done. I think it's the most amazing, the most amazing verse in this whole section for me is the verse that says, the verse that explains that Simeon's an old man and he took, he took him in his arms and blessed him.

The Son of God, the eternal King of Kings. Simeon, an old man, unnoticed in the whole history of the universe, takes the Son of God in his arms.

There's amazing mystery there. There's amazing wonder and awe, and he worshiped and he sung as he had this great mystery of the incarnate God in his arms.

[13 : 45] And that remains a great mystery for us. It's revealed and true, but a great mystery nonetheless for one that we're greatly thankful for. Simeon, the Holy Spirit, inspires Simeon to worship.

And then also, lastly, the Holy Spirit also teaches through Simeon for us. He reminds us that Jesus, this baby that is going to become the Savior, or is the Savior of the world, is for all the people's salvation, is for all the people's.

It's not just for Jewish people. It's not just for Simeon. It's not just for that time of year. It's not just for Scottish people. It's for every nation, for every tongue, for every people.

There's no other message. It is never irrelevant, no matter how many Christmases go by, no matter what age or stage you are at human history, no matter how secular or irreligious or sophisticated or scientific we become.

This message is for all people of all time. There is no other child God Jesus. There is no other circumstances that can bring us salvation.

[14 : 55] It's the revelation through the Holy Spirit of God's plan for all time, for all people who will put their trust in Him. God is the Creator of us all.

So there's never a time when we... It is irrelevant for us to deal with our Creator and to deal with the separation that sin has caused between us and our Creator because we will meet Him one day.

Everyone will meet Him and we will meet Him either in Christ or separated from Him out of Christ with all the horror of that. And we plead as we go into 2023 as a congregation, a church family, we pray for all the people that we know and love who don't know Jesus, many of them who came our carol service, who we love, who we pray for.

We pray that the Holy Spirit will move and bring them to Himself this year. The church numbers will be doubled and trebled by God and by His grace. Jesus is for everyone we're taught here.

But also we're taught that Jesus Himself brings light and glory and grief. He brings light. We're told that He is a light for revelation to the Gentiles.

[16 : 04] And so Jesus is the light that reveals God, isn't He? When we know Jesus, we know God. He has seen me, has seen the Father. And so He reveals not only, God but He reveals to us the great love of God, the great grace and compassion of God.

And you've got that just for a minute if you think back to the reading in Isaiah, that amazing picture of the Messiah who doesn't come shouting and screaming on the rooftops, who's powerful but gentle, that great picture of a bruised reed that He will not break, a smoldering candle He will not snuff out.

With unflinching justice, who will never stumble until all is fulfilled, who will open eyes, free captives from darkened prisons, who will bring new things to bear in our lives.

The source of all light is Jesus who comes. So Jesus brings light. Jesus we're told brings glory for glory for my people Israel.

So there is a day that will come that hasn't come yet because we know that for the most part Israel has rejected Jesus, they crucified Him, they rejected, the people of Israel rejected Him and still do for the most part.

[17 : 15] But we know that there is a day coming when He will reveal Himself to His people and they will see Him for who He is and will glory in Him and will bring Him in.

And Corinthians 1 reminds us that for many people, sorry, Romans 11, 25 to 26 reminds us that there will be a day when those who are of God's people, chosen people, naturally the Israelites will come and follow Him.

So He brings light, He brings glory. And maybe I shouldn't finish with this, but it's just the way it lands here, but He also brings grief and there's that tremendously sad prophecy of Simeon's just at the end, to marry the mother of Jesus and a sword will pierce your own soul.

So she grows up knowing that her son is rejected by so many people around him. And of course, more than that, she has the horror as a mother and all mothers here will know what or can't imagine what it would be like seeing your son beaten and bruised and rejected and then nailed to a cross.

How terrible that must have been, hearing her own people saying, crucify Him, crucify Him. And yet that rejection, that darkness, that grief is what God used to bring salvation to the world.

[18 : 48] What was Satan's darkest moment became the moment that God shone a light of salvation into the world.

And we know and recognize that that's still the same. There are realities of grief when we follow Jesus because many people oppose Him and because we walk a different way to many people in the world.

We have our own hearts that we battle against. So we find that we have two roads that we struggle with and we seek to follow Jesus Christ.

And every day we have a choice to make, whether follow God in faith and belief and truth or where we give in to unbelief and to temptation.

And we know there's that choice, both in our lives as Christians, but there's also that choice if you're not a Christian today that you either have faith or you have unbelief. In the words of Bob Dylan, there ain't no neutral ground.

[19 : 53] You have either got faith or you've got unbelief. There's two roads in terms of rejecting or accepting Jesus Christ. And we know the Bible speaks of that so powerfully and strongly.

It's not like it's a surprise. And that is what we are to do. What will it be, the greatest gift of all that has been offered to the world in Jesus Christ and that we think of today when we think of Jesus' birth and His life and death and resurrection.

Who is it that you're going to follow and who will be your Savior, your Lord and who will bring light into your life in 2023? Let's pray.

Father God, we ask that you'd help us to understand you better. We thank you for a Simeon song. We thank you for his prophecy. We thank you that you worked in him and in Zechariah and in Mary and in Joseph and through the angels as they revealed to the shepherds, your great salvation.

We rejoice that that is fixed in history, that it's not myth and it's not make-believe, but we know that the universe revolves around the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and His return.

[21 : 12] So Lord, help us to live in that perspective and live accepting your greatest gift of salvation and of the Holy Spirit to help us live our Christian lives so that we recognize it's not about our earning, but it's about your wonderful mercy and grace.

So continue with us and bless us as we sing our parting song together. In Jesus' name, amen.