

Simeon's Christmas

Our text this morning is Luke 2:25-35:

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹ *"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss^[e] your servant in peace.*

³⁰ *For my eyes have seen your salvation,*

³¹ *which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:*

³² *a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel."*

³³ *The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵ so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."*

This season is a busy one. For us it is the busiest of the year. There is a lot to do. Every year I promise myself I will try to do things sooner so as not to have such a thrash around the Christmas season to give us more time to reflect on the season's meaning. We will do our Christmas letter by Thanksgiving. I will get all the presents by the first week in December. I will get the Christmas tree up by Dec 1. The list goes on and every year I fall short and the weeks and days compress and again I am scrambling to get everything done. And of course, my reflection time went out the window.

Simeon gives us a pattern for a better way to approach this time of year as he exhibits five spiritual disciplines, or attributes we may emulate. Let us examine the text.

Vs 25a: *Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout.*

We are introduced to Simeon in verse 25. Note he lives *in Jerusalem*, which means he is probably not an agrarian person. He is a city man, most likely a merchant, a religious leader, or other official. We are not told if he has a wife, or a family, a business, a big house, or anything else other than he was *righteous*, which means he observed the law outwardly in a manner that could not be faulted. And he was also *devout*. Devout means you are devoted. Simeon was devoted to God. He was committed to God. He wanted to serve God.

Wait

Vs 25b: *He was waiting for the consolation of Israel,*

Verse 25 introduces us to the first attitude or discipline Simeon exhibits. It is waiting. The Hebrew word for waiting is qavah. It means to wait, to look, to hope, to expect. Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel. In more simple terms, he was waiting for Messiah to show up. And this is the lesson of our day. We are to wait for Jesus to show up. What do I mean? Yes, I know God is omnipresent, which is a fancy word for saying God is everywhere, but though God is always present he does not always feel present. However, there are times when he does. When we receive an encouraging word, or give a loving hug, when we visit elderly shut ins or someone in the hospital, when we provide a meal, or do a kind act, we can sense the presence of Jesus. This is the attitude Simeon cultivated; waiting for the presence of Christ. I know this sounds a bit mystical, but looking for, expecting, seeking, hoping for, waiting for the presence of Christ in your day is well worth contemplating.

Listen and Go

Vs 25c-27: *and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required,*

The second attribute or discipline is noted in vs 25c through verse 27. The verses note the Holy Spirit was upon Simeon and moved him. Some translations say the HS led him. This is the second characteristic of Simeon's life. He listened to the nudging of the HS and went as directed. Now note this attribute is very closely related to the first. The first attribute is that Simeon is looking, he is waiting, he is hoping, he is faithfully expecting, for the Lord Jesus to show up. This is the type of person God rewards as Hebrews 11:6 says *without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.* And as Simeon is waiting, seeking, hoping, and looking God the HS tells him to go into the temple court. The question is where is the HS leading you this season? Do not pray for God to call you and then not answer the phone. Listen to the nudging of God's Spirit for He wants to show you where the Lord is. And when He tells you, go!

Embrace

Vs 28a: *Simeon took him into his arms.*

I love this sequence and verse. Simeon is looking, seeking, hoping, and waiting and the HS tells him to go to the temple court and Simeon goes. Then the HS says to him, here Simeon is your Lord whom you seek. And Simeon takes the baby and embraces his Lord. When you think about it this was rather a bold and brazen act. From Joseph and Mary's view a total stranger approaches them in the temple then takes their baby in his arms and starts speaking. We are not privilege to this interaction, but we know Mary and Joseph allowed Simeon to embrace their son. Heartfelt embracing implies three things. The first is there is nothing wrong relationally between you and the person you are embracing. There is no tension, no hidden agenda, no ulterior motive; You are in sync. Second, the act of embracing (or hugging) means

you are giving. You are expressing your love, your appreciation, and your thankfulness for that person. And thirdly, you are receiving. Embracing means receiving. Embracing is to receive from the other person. Now note in Simeon's case as he embraces the child, he receives both words of praise and blessing (which we will get to in a moment) but there is something bittersweet he says to Mary; *This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,*³⁵ *so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.* You see when we embrace the Lord, we also embrace anything to make us more like Him, including pain, stressful circumstances, and relationships, and the giving up of dreams and desires should God ask of us. This was Mary's destiny; fully embracing her son was to cause a sword to pierce her own heart as her own dreams and desires for her son were not to be.

Praise

Vs 28b-33: *and praised God, saying:*²⁹ *"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss^[e] your servant in peace.*³⁰ *For my eyes have seen your salvation,*³¹ *which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:*³² *a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."*³³ *The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.*

Verse 28b highlights the 4th attribute Simeon exhibited and that is after embracing His Lord, he praised God. Verses 29 through 32 are a reference to the Abrahamic Covenant in which God said to Abraham through you all the peoples on earth will be blessed, and to Is 42:6 and 49:6 where God says to Isaiah, He (Jesus) will be a covenant for the people (of Israel) and a light for the Gentiles. The important thing to note here is once Simeon embraced the Lord, he broke out in praise. He thanked the Lord for the chance to encounter Him. Note Joseph and Mary marveled, which means they were struck with wonder. This season let us praise God when we encounter Him.

Bless

Vs: 34, *Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,*³⁵ *so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."*

Verse 34 gives us the last attribute that Simeon exhibits and that is He blessed. I mentioned before, the blessing Simeon delivers is a tough one for it predicts the turmoil, conflict, and division Christ will cause and the pain Christ's life will bring to Mary his mother. But here is the relevant point. When you wait and God leads you too where He is, and you encounter the Lord, praise, and bless! To bless is to confer God's prosperity on someone. It is to be a vessel through whom God can pour on them his kindness and grace. There are three ways to do this practically. The first is affirmation (including encouragement) which confirms to that party how much they are valued. Second, provide acts of kindness, for this demonstrates God's grace and mercy, and lastly, give gifts for this shows God's bounty and abundance. (from Michael Frost *Surprise the World*, the 5 habits of highly missional people).

So, this season, let's take a lesson from Simeon; wait, listen, and go, embrace, praise, and bless. Amen.

