



Welcome to Grace Communion International

December 27, 2020

SERMON

**SEEING BEYOND THIS
PRESENT WORLD**



SCRIPTURE READING

Luke 2:21-40 (ESV)

Mrs. Vera Abbott





“21 ¶ And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

22 And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord

23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”)

Luke 2:21-40 (ESV)



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“24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, **“a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”**”

25 ¶ 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.

Luke 2:21-40 (ESV)



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“26 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.

27And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law,

28 he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,”

Luke 2:21-40 (ESV)



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“29 “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;

30 for my eyes have seen your salvation

31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,”

Luke 2:21-40 (ESV)



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“32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”

33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.

34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed”

Luke 2:21-40 (ESV)



“35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin,

Luke 2:21-40 (ESV)



“37 and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.

38 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.”

Luke 2:21-40 (ESV)



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39 And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

40 And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.”

Luke 2:21-40 (ESV)

THESE INSPIRED WORDS TEACH US ABOUT JESUS HUMBLE BEGINNINGS ON THIS EARTH.

THANK YOU GOD FOR GIVING YOUR SON TO SAVE THE WORLD THROUGH HIM.

GLORY BE TO GOD!

AMEN



During today's sermon, I would like to give you a bit of background about these scriptures. Afterward, we will consider what Simeon and Anna had in common with others who were given the privilege of recognizing who Jesus really was, God come down from heaven in our flesh.

We will also consider what seeing Jesus through the eyes of faith means for us.

The Circumcision of Jesus



All the Jewish boys had to be circumcised on the eighth day according to Old Testament laws and regulations.

“1 ¶ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Speak to the people of Israel, saying, ‘If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. 3 And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.” (Le 12:1-3 ESV)

On the day of his circumcision, his name was officially given as told Mary by the angel: **Jesus**, a name which means "Jehovah is salvation".

Jesus, during all his life until his death lived under the requirements of the Old Testament.

The Presentation in the Temple



The presentation at the temple was for both Mary and Jesus but for different reasons.

“1 ¶ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2, ‘Speak to the people of Israel, saying, ‘If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean.’ (Le 12:1-2 ESV)

“Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed.” (Le 12:4 ESV)

“6 ¶ “And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering, 7 and he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her. Then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female. 8 And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.”” (Le 12:6-8)

ESV)

After 40 days, the woman, in this case Mary the mother of Jesus, had to present herself at the temple for purification. The priest had to make atonement for her to restore her cleanliness.

There is a false biblical teaching that Mary was immaculate and never sinned. If Mary had been sinless, she would not have had to offer a turtledove or a pigeon for a sin offering. Mary also needed her son Jesus to die for her to cover her sinfulness. Like all other human beings, her life was not a sinless one.

The presentation of Jesus At the Temple

- “(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”)” (Lu 2:23 ESV)



It is important to note that Jesus was not part of the Levitical priesthood. He was a Jew and in him the priesthood was changed.

In the Old Testament, God brought a change with regard to the male firstborn who belonged to him. Instead of asking all the Israelites to offer their firstborn to the Lord, God chose the tribe of Levi as representative of all Israelites firstborn. The Levites represented all the firstborn in Israel. The following are some reference verses.

Numbers 3:45 ⁴⁵“Take the Levites in place of all the firstborn of Israel, and the livestock of **the** Levites in place of their livestock. **The Levites** are to be mine. I am **the** LORD.”

Numbers 3:12-13 ¹²“I have taken the Levites from among the Israelites in place of **the** first male offspring of every Israelite woman. **The Levites** are mine, ¹³ for all the firstborn are mine. When I struck down **all the** firstborn in Egypt, I set apart for myself every **firstborn** in Israel, whether human or animal. They are to be mine. I am the LORD.”

Jesus was presented as "holy to the Lord".

Finding Peace, Comfort, Consolation and Joy in Jesus: a Common Experience



As I read these passages of Scripture in this gospel and the other Gospels, it is noticeable that all those who received a revelation of the birth of Jesus came from different parts of society. All those who saw Jesus as his birth and who knew who he truly was were amazed and awed. They gave Jesus great honor. Their lives were changed forever!

1 – **The Shepherds:** these were people who looked after sheep to eke out their living. They too had families and children. Just like farmhands today, they were not part of the high echelon of society. God chose to reveal himself to them.

2 – **The Magi:** From the biblical account in Matthew, we understand the following about who these Magi were: ***“They came ‘from the east’ to Jerusalem, spoke with Herod, and then went to Bethlehem; they had seen ‘his star in the east;’ they came to worship the King of the Jews; they followed the star which ‘went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was,’ and they were overjoyed when they saw the star; they brought expensive gifts and worshiped Him; and they returned to their own country.*** (from www.truthinscripture.net) They were rich kings, distinguished people who came to worship king Jesus.

3- **Mary and Joseph** were given special privileges as they received the revelation that Mary would bear the divine Son of God and that she and Joseph would be his physical parents.

4- **Elizabeth**, the mother of John the Baptist, rejoiced when she saw Mary pregnant and carrying the Saviour of the world in her womb.

5- The **angelic hosts** who revealed these truths to various people were also very excited about the coming of Jesus.

6—Then we have **Simeon and Anna** who were very old. In our society most elderly people tend to be disregarded in their old age.

Certainly, this is not how God sees the elderly. We are not told very much about Simeon except that he was a righteous and devout man. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. (Verse 26.)

We are not told very much about the prophetess Anna and who was the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She had lived with her husband for seven years and then as a widow until she was 84. We can only guess her real age but some commentators say that she was at least 105 years old.

God worked through her to thank God and to spread the good news that the redemption of Israel had finally arrived!

Many of us are well in their senior years. This does not mean that God will not use us to spread the good news of Jesus. In fact, he does.

God works through all kinds of people in all kinds of places to be his ambassadors on this earth. What a privilege we have. For all of us who are older are to see ourselves through God's eyes and not through the eyes of society.

- Seeking God's Face
 - “One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.” (Ps 27:4 ESV)
 - “7 ¶ Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud; be gracious to me and answer me! 8 You have said, “Seek my face.” My heart says to you, “Your face, LORD, do I seek.”” (Ps 27:7-8 ESV)



Led by the Holy Spirit, both Simeon and Anna sought the face of God.

As the birth of Jesus was revealed to the shepherds and the Magi, they also sought to see God's face.

All those who saw the face of Jesus physically found great peace and joy.

This was Simeon's experience when he waited and sought to see Jesus, the Lord's Christ, the Lord's Messiah. This is what he said, (next slice)

“29 “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word; 30 for my eyes have seen your salvation

31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your
people Israel.””

Luke 2:29-32 (ESV)



When Simeon saw Jesus, he saw salvation. Jesus is our salvation. And this salvation was for all people both for the Gentiles and for Israel.

I do not have to convince you that this world is going to great travails and hardship.

No one wants this world to remain as it is filled with wars, famines, pandemics, political tensions, linguistic tensions, racial tensions, gender tensions between men and women. No one wants the quiet pandemic of domestic abuse and violence continue.

No one wants to see people living on the street with nowhere to go, living rough as we now say.

No one wants to see prostitution. No one wants to see people ruining their lives with all kinds of drugs.

No one wants to see people living in refugee camps because they cannot live in their own country anymore.

In our rich country, no one wants to see children depending on the schools to have their morning and noon meals. No one wants to see the children in our rich country be food insecure.

No one wants to see thousands of people having to go to the food banks to get their food even in Canada.

No one wants to see the elderly being abused in some nursing homes.

No one wants to see the tension between nations. No one wants to see the proliferation of the arms race where countries try to outdo one another in developing weapons to destroy one another. It is thought that the most powerful country has over the others that it will deter the others from using their powerful weapons against them.

No one wants to see plastic pollution and other kinds of pollution destroying our oceans; no one wants to see the overfishing and the disappearance of too many species living in these vast oceans.

No one wants to see the rising water of the oceans threatening the very lives of those who live along their shores.

No one wants to see false religions build on lies and deceiving people.

The list goes on.

Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, humans have tried to resolve these tensions without much success.

Jesus is the hope of the nations. That is the mission God the Father assigned to Jesus from before the creation of the world – to restore humanity and creation to how God wants it to be.

As God's people, we realize that we live in two worlds. As Alister McGrath says in his book "The Christian Life and Hope, a Guide for Study and Devotion" (page 71), **"Many Christians feel a similar tension in their lives. We seem to be suspended between two worlds – the world we now know and inhabit and the unseen world we believe we will one day enter. We are passing through one world, which is not our home, on our way to another, which is where we truly belong. We are sojourners and pilgrims here on earth, travelling to the new Jerusalem. We travel in faith and hope, believing that our true destiny lies in heaven, where the risen Jesus has gone before us."**

Because Jesus came, the suffering of this world has not yet stopped or ceased but it will.

**“34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,
“Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many
in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed**

**35 (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so
that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.””**

Luke 2:34-35 ESV



Simeon told Mary that she would experience great suffering because of what Jesus came to do for all of us.

He also prophesied that hearts are revealed as to how we react to Jesus once it is revealed to us who he is.

Once God open our minds, we have the choice to accept or reject him. Love cannot be forced. God will not force himself on us. He has done everything for us. He has come towards us in Jesus.

The chasm between humanity and God no longer exist because of Jesus’ perfect life, his death on the cross, his resurrection and his ascension to the heavenly throne as a perfect man still being God.

Once we know Jesus, we have a responsibility to respond to his love and to the love of God the Father towards us by accepting Him and living in his love.

The good news is that we are not left on our own to do so God the Holy Spirit was sent after the ascension of Jesus to dwell in our hearts to empower us to live by his

love as we respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, he gives us the gift of righteousness, of being right before him by receiving the righteousness of Jesus, the only man who has lived as man should live – a sinless life perfectly responding to the Father’s will.

We are called to respond to the good news in the obedience of faith. That it was how Simeon lived and Anna lived when they found their true peace in Jesus.

C.S. Lewis says it well how we become when we meet Jesus. (Next slide).

I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or be unthankful for, these earthly blessings, and on the other, never to mistake them for the something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find until after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country.

(From: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND HOPE, A Guide for Studying Devotion, Alister McGrath page 75)



Like Simeon and Anna, let us value the revelation that we have been given about who Jesus is. Let us keep our eyes on him.

Let us remember that we are the beloved children of God the Father. Let us remember that Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters.

Let us remember that we live in this world as his ambassadors. While we journey towards the fullness of the kingdom of God, we are to project God's light in this world. We are called to be a blessing to others even if they do not recognize the new life we have been given in Christ.

Let us always remember, as Simeon and Anna, we are to seek first the kingdom of God and the face of God.

As we look at this world and live in this world with its sufferings and multiple tragedies, let us remember to look beyond this world with the hope that can only be found in Jesus.

Let us remember that Jesus was sent to the earth by God the Father not to condemn

the world but that the world will be saved through him - that is everyone who will trust him for salvation.

Let us remember that this world is destined to become a better world, a new world, where sin and death will no longer exist. Let us remember that we are already citizen of this new world. As the apostle Paul said, **“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Col 3:3 ESV).**

Let us look beyond to world as we live productively in it because this world is destined to become a perfect world forever because of what Jesus, the Son of God, has done for all who believe now, all those who believed in the past and all those who will believe in Him as God visits and reveals himself to them.

Let us pray.